

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TUNIS 03628 241517Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 IO-13 NEAE-00 OES-07 DLOS-09
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SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 FEA-00 /109 W
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P R 241440Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6867
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 3628

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, ELAB, TS, LY
SUBJECT1 HABIB ACHOUR'S VISIT TO TRIPOLI

REF: TUNIS 3475, TUNIS 3542

1. EMBASSY OFFICER MET WITH UGTT LEADER HABIB ACHOUR AFTER LATTER'S RETURN FROM ICFTU MEETING HELD IN ROME. ACHOUR HAD GONE TO ROME AFTER RETURNING TO TUNIS FROM TRIPOLI VISIT, PAUSING HERE LONG ENOUGH ONLY TO REPORT TO PRIME MINISTYLVOUIRA ON MEETING WITH COL. QADHAFI. ACHOUR GAVE US DESCRIPTION OF HIS MEETING WITH QADHAFI THAT GENERALLY FOLLOWED LINES OF HIS STATEMENT TO PRESS ON MAY 17 AS REPORTED IN TUNIS 3475.

2. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, ACHOUR DID NOT INDICATE THAT HE HAD REACHED ANY SPECIFIC AGREEMENT WITH QADHAFI ON HOW CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE MIGHT BE RESOLVED. ACHOUR EMPHASIZED THAT HE HAD REASONED WITH QADHAFI THAT UNITY OF TUNISIA AND LIBYA COULD ONLY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TUNIS 03628 241517Z

COME AFTER LONG PROCESS OF CONFIDENCE BUILDING IN MUTUAL COOPERATION. ACHOUR NOTED THAT THIS INCLUDED AMICABLE SETTLEMENT OF CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE AS PART OF THAT PROCESS. HE SAID QADHAFI ACCEPTED HIS REASONING AND ALSO HIS SUGGESTION THAT TUNISIAN AND LIBYAN EXPERTS COULD REACH A SUITABLE SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTE. FAILING THIS, ACHOUR TOLD US, QADHAFI ACCEPTED SUGGESTION THAT ARAB EXPERTS COULD GIVE FRUITFUL ASSISTANCE. ACHOUR SAID

THAT ICJ ARBITRATION IS NOW OUT OF THE QUESTION.

3. ON OTHER BILATERAL ISSUES, ACOOUR SAID HE DISCUSSED TUNISIAN WORKER EMIGRATION TO LIBYA WITH QADHAFI (SEE TUNIS 3542). HE BELIEVED THAT GREAT OPPORTUNITY NOW EXISTS FOR SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN NUMBER OF TUNISIANS WORKING IN LIBYA, CALLING POSSIBILITIES "UNLIMITED." HE SAID HE WOULD URGE GOT TO PRESS IMMEDIATELY FOR EXPANDED EMIGRATION TO SATISFY LIBYAN NEEDS FOR WORKERS.

4. ACHOUR ALSO TOLD US HE HAD MET WITH EX-GOT FOREIGN MINISTER MO-HAMED MASMOUDI WHILE HE WAS IN TRIPOLI. HE DID NOT GIVE US DETAILS OF CONVERSATIONS BUT INDICATED THAT HE IS WORKING HARD TO GET MASMOUDI BACK TO TUNISIA AND INTO GOVERNMENT, PROBABLY AS FOREIGN MINISTER AGAIN.

5. IT APPEARS THAT ACHOUR GOT VERY LITTLE OUT OF QADHAFI ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE OTHER THAN SOOTHING WORDS. ON THE OTHER HAND, ACHOUR AND UGTT THROUGH ITS WEEKLY NEWSPAPER ECH-CHAAB HAVE SOUGHT TO PICTURE HIS SESSION WITH QADHAFI AS A MAJOR BREAK-THROUGH IN LIBYAN/TUNISIAN RELATIONS. MOTIVES SEEM TO BE ACHOUR'S POLITICAL SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT. ACHOUR INDICATED TO US THAT HE PLANS TO CONTINUE INITIATIVES IN LIBYAN AFFAIRS WITH OBJECTIVE OF ENDING CONFLICT AND CREATING MORE FAVORABLE CLIMATE FOR COOPERATION. HE SAID HE WILL FOSTER DECLARATIONS BY TRADE UNIONISTS IN BOTH COUNTRIES IN PURSUIT OF THIS GOAL.

6. LIBYA APPEARS TO NEED TUNISIAN WORKERS WHO CONTINUE TO BE A SURPLUS AT HOME. ACHOUR IS NO DOUBT SINCERE IN EFFORTS TO FIND EMPLOYMENT FOR THEM IN THE ATTRACTIVE LIBYAN JOB MARKET. LIBYANS CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 TUNIS 03628 241517Z

HAVE AT LEAST MADE EFFORT TO GIVE ACHOUR VISIT AURA OF SUCCESS SINCE THEY PROVIDED THE UGTT LEADER WITH SPECIAL AIRCRAFT TO FLY HIM HOME AND HAVE PROMISED 15,000 DINAR (\$35,000) CONTRIBUTION TO CONSTRUCTION OF NEW UGTT HEADQUARTERS IN TUNIS.

7. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO GUESS WHAT QADHAFI'S MOTIVES MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN RECEIVING ACHOUR AND FOR MAKING SOOTHING NOISES TO HIM. HE MAY WELL HAVE INTENDED IT AS A PLOY TO UNDERMINE NOUIRA'S POSITION BY RECEIVING CORDIALLY A TUNISIAN POLITICAL FIGURE WHO IS OCCASIONALLY AT ODDS WITH THE TUNISIAN PRIME MINISTER. MASMOUDI, WHO IS ALMOST ALWAYS AT ODDS WITH NOUIRA, COULD WELL HAVE PLAYED A ROLE IN SETTING UP THIS SCENARIO.

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Message Attributes

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